

CENTURY-OLD FIREHOUSE GETS NEW LEASE ON LIFE

Community rallies to save a fixture on the Duxbury river side

By **KAREN GOULART**
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DUXBURY

In the background, the Bluefish River flows high and lazy into the bay as boats bob in the distance against a sky of pure blue.

At the foreground is a building that completes this Washington Street scene for generations of Duxbury residents.

The Bluefish River Firehouse turned 100 this year. Thanks to the efforts of the Friends of the Bluefish River Firehouse, voters and dozens of donors, it may stand for 100 more.

In 2005, town meeting approved spending \$9,800 in Community Preservation Act money to buy materials. An additional \$20,000 was needed to finish the job.

Friday more than 50 residents turned out to celebrate the completion of this restoration project that began over a year ago.

As dry, cool breeze fluttered bunting above the new "Engine Co. 1" sign, Friends leader Nancy Bennett, found it difficult to find the right words.

She recognized the Community Preservation Committee, everyone in attendance and all who made the day possible.

"I tried to write something to say, but I'm not good at that," she said. "From the bottom of my heart, thank you."

Town Manager Richard MacDonald called the project "a perfect example of what can be accomplished when people care."

Selectman Elizabeth Sullivan agreed, noting that the success of the project showed what Duxbury is all about: people who are willing to share their time and talents and who take an interest in preserving "who we are."

Sullivan said no one more exemplified these traits than Bennett, surprising her with an official proclamation from the town in recognition of her efforts.

"For Nancy's dedication and active participation in a project that fills us with pride today and will for future generations, we on behalf of the

community bestow this recognition," Sullivan read.

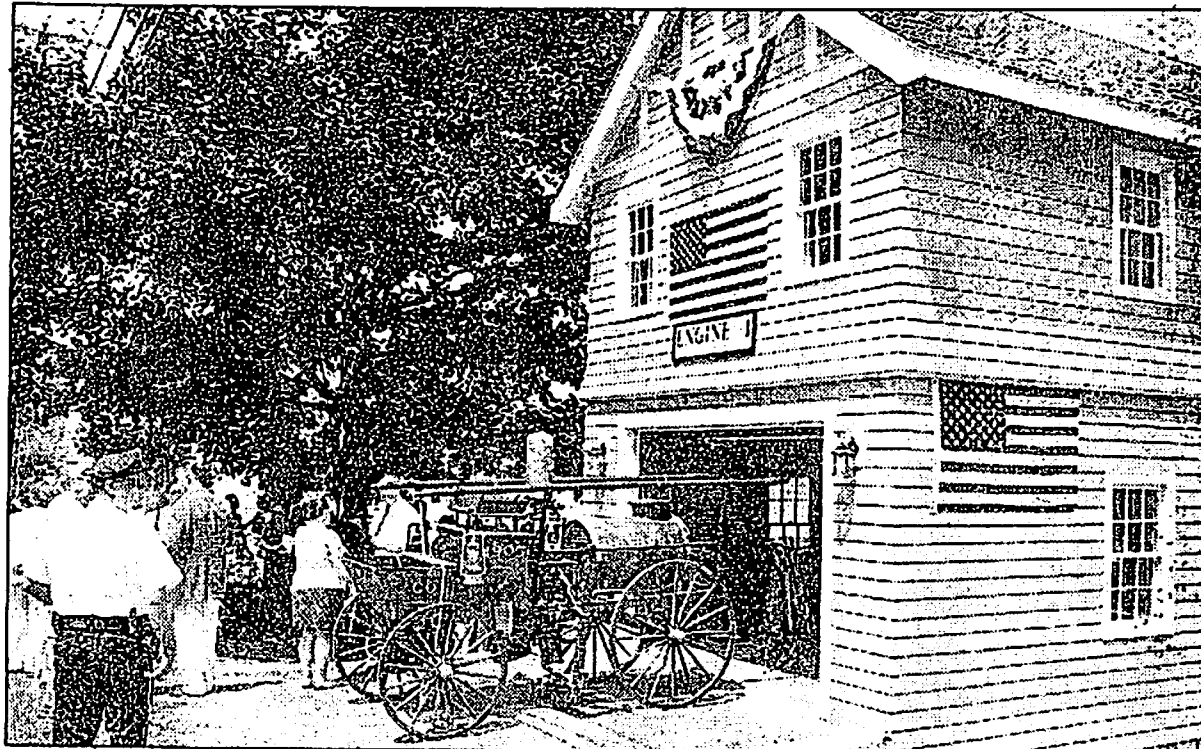
Bennett was also honored by the fire department. Chief Kevin Nord, after offering a brief history of fire service in Duxbury, presented her with a replica chief's shield, emblazoned with Engine Co. 1.

It was March 1906 when town meeting created Engine Co. 1, Duxbury's first fire department. The fire house originally stood on St. George Street on property owned by the Wright family. When they decided to build a library, the fire house had to be moved.

The building was pulled by horses to Washington Street – and its current location beside the river. Fire wagons were kept inside the building where harbor master equipment is now stored. The horses that pulled the wagon were kept in a barn across the street where Skip Taylor's parents once resided.

Taylor attended the celebration yesterday and told guests when fires broke out in town, his father would be the first person at Engine Co. 1, bolting across the street to open the massive wooden door.

Attendees were enrapt by the



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People gather Friday in Duxbury to celebrate the restoration of the Bluefish River Firehouse, which turned 100 this year.

recollections of Stanley Merry, whose father Hortense "Hot" Merry was the chief of Engine Co. 1.

The family lived just a few doors away on Washington Street. As a boy, Stanley, too had a role to play. When there was fire, he would run down the road to firehouse and crank the siren.

He recounted also the tragicomic

story of when his father once left town – a rarity in those days– only to return and find Ford's Store, thought to be America's first department store, had burned to the ground.

While it has been years since the building was used by the town's fire service, it is still serving citizens. It is currently used to store equipment used

by the harbormaster.

Next week, before it returns to being that unassuming yet essential element of Duxbury's sublime scenery, it will take on a new role: the judges' station for the town's 114th Fourth of July parade.

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